



U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome



DARFUR

**Plagued by Violence,
Paralyzed by Fear,
Ravaged by Hunger**

A Report from the Field

By Ambassador

Tony P. Hall,

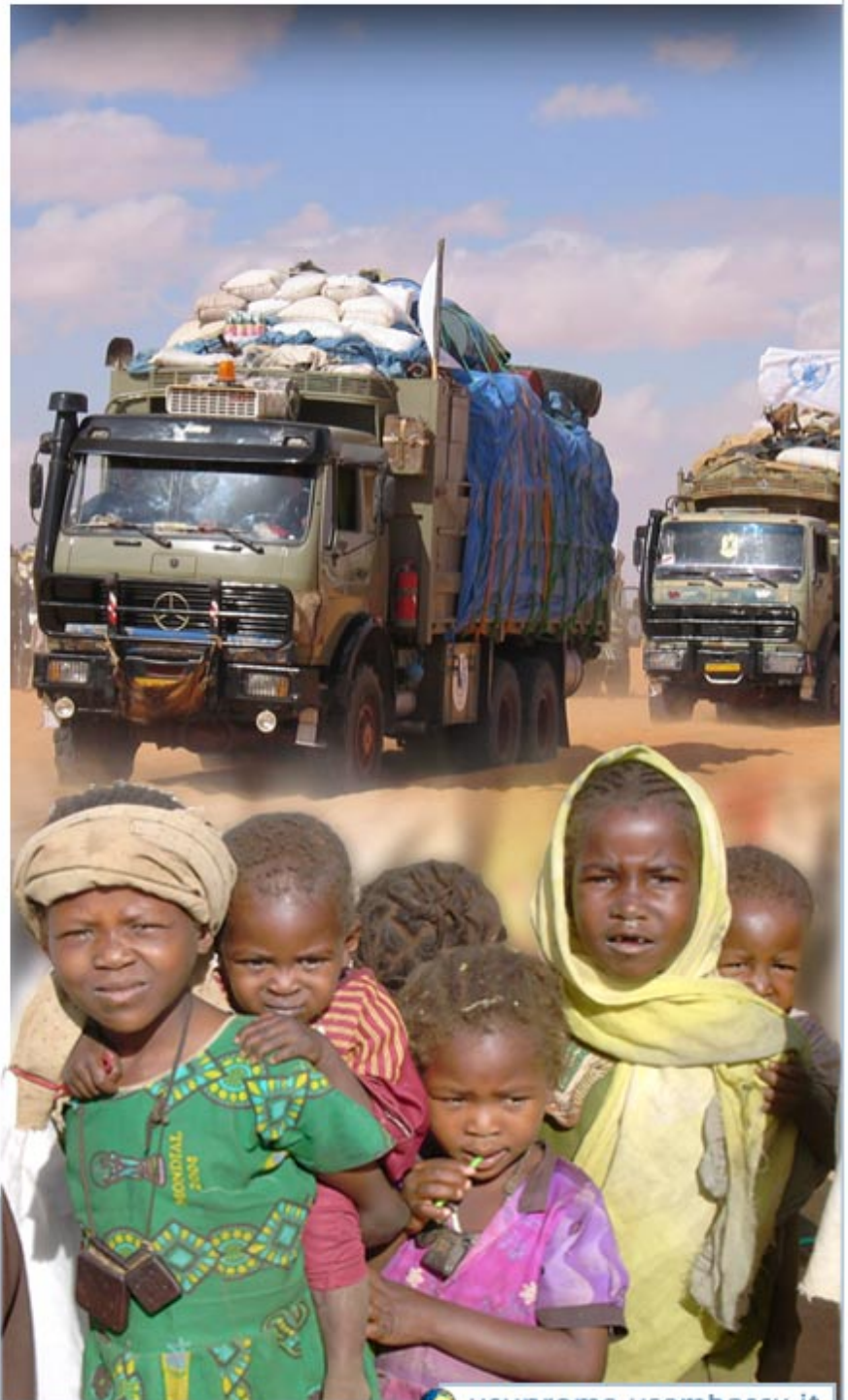
U.S. Mission to the

UN Agencies

for Food and Agriculture

Sudan and Libya

November 17-23, 2004



**USUN Rome
Mission Trip Reports**

November 2004



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November 2004

Darfur, Sudan:

Plagued by Violence, Paralyzed by Fear, Ravaged by Hunger

Report from the Field

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In the shadow of historic agreements to bring peace to the south of Sudan, the violence and humanitarian crisis in the east casts a cloud over the entire region. The inter-tribal conflicts over land and resources flared up last year, exacerbated by government support for marauding militias, known as *jangawit*. Since February 2003, the fighting has displaced more than 1.8 million people, including 201,000 refugees in Chad. Despite cease-fire agreements, fighting continues on both sides, leading to a continued increase in the number of displaced people requiring humanitarian assistance.

U.S. Ambassador Tony Hall led a delegation to assess the dire situation in the Darfur region of Sudan and to observe UN operations, principally those of the World Food Program (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The second part of the trip was to witness the first convoy of American food aid to go through Libya, destined for the Sudanese refugees in Chad. This historic humanitarian cooperation, between the Governments of Libya and the United States, along with WFP, is a bright spot in an otherwise dark situation.

Ambassador Hall, Humanitarian Counselor Earl Gast, Special Assistant Max Finberg and Agricultural Advisor John Nakamura, along with four journalists, went to camps for the displaced in North, South and West Darfur. After a day of meetings in the capital of Khartoum, they journeyed to Tripoli and Al-Kufrah, Libya, where they were joined by Public Affairs Officer Carla Benini and other journalists. WFP officials traveled with the delegation throughout, as did the FAO Emergency Coordinator for Sudan, members of the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in Darfur and the U.S. Liaison Office in Tripoli.



Men distribute U.S.-donated corn soya blend used to feed malnourished children.

An Overview of the Situation

There are three Darfur states in Western Sudan, stretching along the entire borders with Libya and Chad. They comprise an area about the same size as the state of Texas or the country of France. The overall population is approximately six million people, mostly from seven Arab and several other African tribes. (The name Darfur means the home of the Fur tribe.)

Fighting is between rebel groups – primarily the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – and the Government of Sudan and their allied militias, the *jangawit*. This ongoing lack of security is preventing UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from fully implementing their mandate to serve the region's most needy. A poor harvest, which FAO estimates to be 15 to 50 percent of past yields, will lead to more people requiring food aid.

Early next year, WFP is expected to increase its operations from feeding 1.1 to 1.3 million people – as it is now – to 2.3 million people every month. Insecurity, more importantly, is likely to prevent the internally displaced people (IDPs) from returning to their homes in time for the next planting season in May/June 2005. Another crop failure in 2005 could guarantee several more years of feeding and providing for a growing share of the entire population. WFP's emergency feeding program for Darfur alone, not including refugees in Chad, is estimated to cost \$361 million for calendar year 2005.

Throughout the region, there are approximately 150 camps housing the displaced. Other victims have escaped into Chad, moved into towns, or live in the wild in order to escape further violence.

The crisis is extremely grave because there is a documented 23 percent rate of global acute malnutrition in the Darfur region. The normal threshold for emergencies is 15 percent. This means that almost 1 in every 4 children under five years old is badly malnourished.

More than one-third of North Darfur's 1.6 million persons have become displaced as a result of the conflict. One-third of the schools are closed, six of eleven hospitals have been destroyed, and one-third of the 69 pharmacies have been wiped out. The state has suffered from drought continually over the past four years, which has adversely affected livestock and crops.

In October and November, approximately 80,000 persons from the Jabel Marreh area (the fertile mountains and hills where the three Darfur states converge) have become displaced. With an ever-increasing population of IDPs, the system set up to provide marginal support is becoming overstressed. The Government of Sudan insists that people are returning to their homes, often citing the figure 77,000, but no outside group has been able to corroborate that number. Instead, there is widespread fear and mistrust of the government by the communities.

A Historic Trip to the Libyan Desert

At the end of the trip, the delegation joined the Governor of Al-Kufrah, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and journalists in the town of Al-Kufrah, in southeastern Libya. Al-Kufrah is the town where the road ends and the desert takes over. The reason for the visit was to open a new corridor for humanitarian aid for those in need living in Chad and Darfur, Sudan.

The logistical challenges are immense to serve those in need affected by this crisis. West Darfur is one of the points in Africa furthest from the sea. Much of the aid to Darfur comes through Port Sudan on



After a respite in Al-Kufrah, Libya, trucks carrying U.S. food aid head to refugee camps in Chad.

the Red Sea and the other route is through Douala, Cameroon. It is not easy to serve the almost two million people in this crisis in both Chad and Sudan, due to the large distances and cost.

Libya becomes another important route to serve these hungry and malnourished people, especially during the rainy season. During that time, both of the other routes sometimes close because many of the roads become impassible. This is an important third route that will be as effective as the other two.

This is the first time that U.S. food aid is being sent through Libya and the first time in 20 years that the two countries are cooperating to this extent. The kilometer-long convoy contained part of the shipment of 6,540 metric tons of food. The food filled 350 trucks that will embark on this 2,800-kilometer trek through the desert from the port

of Benghazi to the camps in Eastern Chad. This complete package of food will feed the 201,000 Sudanese refugees for two months.

The Libyan government and WFP reached a landmark agreement in August on the Libyan corridor – an ancient trading route. The agreement guaranteed the safe passage of food aid and other humanitarian supplies through Libya to Chad by air, water and road. The corridor was first used later that month as the route for 440 tons of Swiss-donated wheat flour to the camps in Chad. Shipments arrive in the port of Benghazi, the food is loaded onto trucks bound for Al-Kufrah and then continue the journey through the desert. The agreement is good for ten years and for any humanitarian supplies needed in this and any other crisis in the region.

As the battle-worn trucks set off into the sand

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beyond Al-Kufrah, Ambassador Hall was introduced to Ahmed, a Sudanese mechanic traveling with one of the trucks. He and his family are from Darfur and their village was destroyed a few months ago. His family now lives in one of the refugee camps in Chad and he makes sure to take them additional food when he returns to the camps. As the trucks departed, heavily laden with food and fuel, there was a sense that this mission of mercy would deliver hope as well as its cargo.

Upon arrival in Tripoli, the delegation also met with Mohamed Siyala, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed El-Krekshi of the Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, and with the Governor of Al-Kufrah. They were all extremely grateful for the delegation's presence and the gesture of improved cooperation.



The food aid bound for Chad includes enough sorghum, cornmeal, lentils, vegetable oil and corn-soya blend to feed 200,000 refugees for two months.

What the Delegation Witnessed

At the beginning of the trip, Ambassador Hall and the delegation visited two IDP camps in North Darfur, outside of the capital El-Fasher – Abu-Shouk and Zam Zam. Abu-Shouk, the larger of the two with a population estimated at greater than 40,000, is a well-run camp. One of the humanitarian workers referred to it as “the Hilton of camps” because of food availability, good organization, and extensive services, including supplementary and therapeutic feeding units, health care and other services. Supplementary feeding is reaching an estimated 2,000 persons a week.



The north-south Libyan corridor is the newest route used by WFP to deliver food. This targets the most vulnerable, mainly pregnant and lactating mothers, and children under five.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) runs five health clinics in and around El-Fasher, including a health clinic within Abu-Shouk. It employs local doctors who in addition to working at IRC clinics must continue to provide services at state health clinics or hospitals. Since many of the hospitals and clinics suffered damage, some of the doctors are working exclusively at IRC clinics, whose services are open to IDPs and the general population alike.

In contrast to Abu-Shouk, the Zam Zam camp is less organized and grew out of a spontaneous gathering of IDPs. It is smaller in size – perhaps 15,000 persons – and lacks some of the services of Abu-Shouk. It is less sanitary as well, with livestock living among the human population.

At Kalma, just south of Nyala in South Darfur, the camp is a massive sprawl stretching for seven kilometers, resembling a small (and very poor) city. WFP estimates the rolls at more than 113,000 persons, a number which on average is growing by 1,000 a day. The delegation witnessed “ghost settlements” within the camp, which are essentially shells of shelter used only when food distributions take place. The real number of “full-time” residents is estimated around 70,000.

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Nurses told horrific accounts of women brutalized and raped by *jangawit*. One nurse recounted the fact that one 18-year old woman, brought to the clinic two weeks before, had been gang raped by eight men. One pregnant woman, who left camp in search of firewood, was not only raped but at the end of the ordeal had a stick inserted in her, killing her child. This was the most gruesome of the stories the delegation heard. The nurse told us, “There have been so many rapes.” Shortly after the delegation’s visit, the Sudanese Government issued a decree preventing residents of Kalma from gathering firewood. (Firewood is the only means of cooking fuel.)

The delegation flew by helicopter into Zalingei in West Darfur to observe the first food distribution in seven weeks. This town, on the road between Nyala and El Geneina, is home to 60,000 displaced people. Despite the delay from insecurity, the CARE-run program in the Shebab camp was well organized and orderly. Women and children waited patiently in long lines while local CARE staff measured rations. Signs were posted everywhere in Arabic and English. (The English version of the “exit” sign read “Exist” – an appropriate imperative.) No one was visibly angry over having missed rations for the previous month; they were just thankful for the food they got that day and for the help from the United States. When some of the women heard that the delegation was

from the United States, they were extremely grateful and thanked the Ambassador often.



An aerial view of a destroyed village near the border between the states of South and West Darfur.

En route, the delegation saw nine villages that were burned out and abandoned. They were like ghost villages – the houses were destroyed, the land was barren and the people were gone.

The Governor (Wali) of North Darfur told the delegation that there is no genocide. He also said that all people in his region live as one family and that there are generally no problems. He said that all of the violence is coming from the rebel groups. Repeating a question he has used with other delegations, he asked if we could tell the difference between Arab and African in his staff. In response to a general question from Ambassador Hall about what to do to stop the violence, he became extremely defensive.

Back in Khartoum at the end of the visit, the Ambassador gave a blunt account of what he witnessed to State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Mohamed Yousif Abdalla. The Ambassador used the meeting to raise four issues: 1) local taxes being assessed on WFP’s locally procured food; 2) potential cancellation of FAO/WFP joint crop assessment; 3) access from Chad for food aid; and 4) a land tenure law that allows squatters to possess land that has been vacant for more than a year.



Amb. Hall at the former Aljir camp in South Darfur, home to 20,000 displaced people the week before.

The Atmosphere and the Prospects for the Immediate Future

There are many problems that are contributing to the crisis in Darfur and they are all interrelated, but three major ones stood out:

1. FEAR – The people in the camps have fear and do not want to return to their villages. They are afraid of further attacks and that their women will be raped and their men beaten and killed.
2. SECURITY – The lack of security is the overriding issue. Both sides of the conflict appear to be set in their positions and that leads to violence. There is not nearly enough protection for the people to be able to return home.
3. FOOD – Food and humanitarian supplies are desperately needed for the near future and longer. The food crisis will be with us for at least another year and probably two.

The United States commitment to the people of Sudan is sincere and long-standing. Our current donation of food aid represents about 55 percent of the food and other assistance for the Darfur crisis. Since October 2004, we have contributed more than \$366 million to the emergency in the past 13 months. Additionally, we have given another \$194 million in food aid alone for Southern Sudan, plus \$110 million in development assistance, over the past year and a half.

Unfortunately, there is still a need for more resources because there are more people to feed. The humanitarian agencies are still not reaching approximately 300,000 people who desperately need assistance, because they do not have access to them.

Another problem is that this year's harvest is expected to be extremely poor – only 15 percent of the average yield in North Darfur and up to 50 percent in parts of South Darfur, according to FAO. This will also increase pressure on the pastoralists and their herds. In a region that did not have a lot to begin with, this is a terrible blow to peoples' lives, their livelihoods and their ability to survive.

While there have not been any serious epidemics yet, there are also plenty of diseases that are contributing

to the high mortality. The UN has estimated that 70,000 people have died since March from malnutrition and subsequent diseases. Another tragedy is that, despite the Muslim prohibition, there are a staggering number of women who have been raped. Fortunately, families and the communities have been accepting the women and their children, instead of shunning them.

The African Union (AU) is to be commended for its role in Darfur, but at the end of November 2004, they only had 803 monitors on the ground. That is expected to increase to 3,300 by January 2005, and still may be insufficient. There are many accounts of AU troops intervening to prevent incidents from becoming even worse. Currently their mandate is simply to monitor and document violations of the



Amb. Hall with the malnourished 3 year-old daughter of Zahara Abdul el-Karim in North Darfur's Abu Shouck camp

cease-fire. Without an ability to protect civilians, there could be massacres similar to Bosnia and Rwanda, even with troops present.

There is also a problem with land rights and the question of land ownership. Apparently, a Sudanese law passed in the early 1980s states that if land is unoccupied for more than one year, squatters can then take possession of it. Where farmers have been forced from their land into camps, they need to be able to return in peace voluntarily, and without coercion. There could be a potentially major problem if their traditional lands are taken from them.

Recommendations

1. Government officials, *jangawit*, and rebel leaders need to take responsibility for their actions. They need to serve the people they represent. As representatives of their tribe or region, they should consider the long-term interests of their people and the region, not just potential short-term gains.
2. The African Union needs to document crimes against humanity for evidence in the future. The perpetrators of this violence should be held accountable for the crimes they commit. The United States strongly supports the expanded AU mission in Darfur and is pleased that the number of monitors will increase substantially. We hope that there can be more people on the ground to monitor the situation. Additionally, a stronger mandate to allow for the protection of innocent civilians should be explored.
3. The Government and the rebels need to honor the commitments they have made in Abuja allowing for unrestricted access for humanitarian aid. It is unfortunate that the cease-fire agreement of April 8 and the humanitarian and security protocols of November 10 have been signed, but not implemented. The United States joins the world community in condemning the violations of these agreements in the strongest terms.
4. In the long term, there must be steps towards disarmament of all non-governmental parties. While we are not there yet, the large number of weapons in the hands of feuding tribes needs to be reduced in order to prevent further bloodshed. Given the current atmosphere of hatred, mistrust and retaliation, armed gangs will only contribute to the violence.
5. As demonstrated by the UN's Security Council November meeting in Nairobi, the international community needs to continue the dialogue and pressure to bring peace to the region. As the United States has communicated, all sides need to work together for peace. Individual countries, regional associations and international institutions should join in the chorus of voices condemning the violence and calling for an end to the conflict.
6. This humanitarian crisis is not going away any time soon. If planting doesn't start in a few months, the population will require external food aid for at least two more years. The international community needs to make sure there is enough food and other humanitarian assistance, especially for livestock and agricultural development. If donors do not commit money soon, the food will not arrive on time and people will die. The UN's 2005 Work Plan for Sudan requests \$1.5 billion for the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and for the reconstruction in the south. This is a large sum, but the people of Sudan and their future depend on our generosity and compassion.
7. The Government of Sudan should guarantee rights of return to the displaced in Darfur. International pressure should continue in order to prevent the implementation of the 1984 land tenure law. If land is taken away from those who have left it for one year, the conflict over scarce resources will only continue and worsen.



In West Darfur, women hand out a camp's first food distribution in almost two months.

Twenty years ago with the Great Famine in Ethiopia, the world responded with compassion and generosity to the people in need. Rock stars sang, students protested, organizations were founded and people pulled together to stop the dying. We need that to happen again.

**Conclusion and Personal Comment from
Ambassador Hall**

I want to thank the United Nations organizations, particularly WFP and FAO, for performing well under very challenging circumstances. As the Ambassador to those two organizations based in Rome, I also want to say that the other UN agencies are doing well, and the coordination and cooperation that I witnessed is commendable. USAID and the entire NGO community are also doing an admirable job in a difficult situation. I also want to thank the press for making Darfur one of the best publicized humanitarian emergencies in the 20 years that I have been involved with this work.

The stories I heard will continue to haunt me and drive me to do more for these people in need. One woman I spoke with in the Abu Shouk camp in North Darfur had walked almost 160 kilometers because her village was destroyed. In Zalingei, I met several women who thanked me for the food they were receiving. When you are truly hungry, you appreciate the food even more.

Like President George Bush, Ambassador John Danforth, and the American people, I look forward to a solution to this situation in Sudan and a peaceful and prosperous future for this country. ■



Children at Zam Zam Camp, outside of El-Fasher of North Darfur